

Abstract

A method for managing physical distribution of products and returnable containers in which a first party sends at least one product packed in a returnable container to a second party upon a request from the merchandiser to ship the products, and the second party sends back the returnable container to the first party is provided. The method includes receiving a request to ship at least one product from the merchandiser, determining a product inventory balance based on inventory information about the products and the request to ship at least one product, and based on the product inventory balance determination sending a product-shipping notice to the first party, and determining a returnable container inventory balances based on inventory information about the returnable containers and the request to ship at least one product, and based on the returnable container inventory balance determination sending a returnable container-returning notice to the second party.